

**COST RECOVERY & PRICING STUDY
ARTS, RECREATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES (ARCS)**

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Agenda Report

DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 2014

TO: PARK, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION and
ARTS COMMISSION

FROM: ARTS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: COST RECOVERY AND PRICING STUDY

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The City Council's 2012-14 work plan includes a review of cost recovery and pricing practices. This report summarizes the results of a comprehensive study and makes recommendations for a cost recovery and pricing policy for the Arts, Recreation and Community Services Department and the Open Space Division.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Review and comment on the cost recovery and pricing report and the associated policy recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

As part of the 2012-14 work plan, the City Council prioritized a review of cost recovery and pricing practices of the City's Arts, Recreation and Community Services (ARCS) Department. This action was motivated in part by the general economic downturn and a desire to achieve the most effective investment of general fund resources. In 2013, the Open Space programs were added to this review for the same reasons.

The cost recovery study was specifically driven by two primary challenges:

Challenge #1

Cost recovery is defined as the extent to which an activity recovers costs associated with the provision of a program or service. User fees, ticket sales, rentals, grants, donations, fundraising, and partnerships are just some of the mechanisms used to achieve cost recovery results. Program revenues are straightforward and easily tracked and understood. The challenge in Walnut Creek is that the definition of "costs" has not been clearly articulated and therefore, actual cost recovery has been harder to define and measure.

Challenge #2

This challenge focuses primarily on the ARCS Department. The Department has had a general pricing policy in place since 2004, and currently reads as follows:

The Arts, Recreation and Community Services Director or his/her designee will set specific fees within the authorized range. The City’s goal is to charge user fees that are comparable with neighboring agencies, fair and reasonable for the facility or service provided, and that offset operating costs as much as possible. The Director/designee is authorized to offer a limited number of discounted rates for targeted populations such as students, educators, and senior adults, and to offer discounted rates or special promotional packages as sales promotion incentives where applicable.

The policy was intended to be broad and flexible, and while the policy statement itself is fairly simple to articulate, the broad quality makes it difficult to quantify. The Department therefore seeks to create a more consistent and comprehensive set of guidelines. Flexibility, however, is a desirable quality because delivery of market driven services must allow program managers some latitude in setting prices. This flexible approach has worked well for the Department, and a rigid policy is not desirable in this context.

Breaking out the components of the current policy statement, one can see the successes and challenges ARCS has in implementing a comprehensive, consistent and defensible cost recovery effort. Some aspects continue to be valuable and are not recommended to change, while others are identified as contributing to the challenge. These are all described here:

Current Policy Statement	Recommended to Change?
“Set specific fees within the authorized range”	Fee ranges are recommended by staff to the Arts and PROS Commissions on a biennial basis, and ultimately approved by Council as part of the budget development process. Staff has long been granted the authority to set the prices for the hundreds of specific categories of ARCS offerings (rental rates, classes, swim lessons, league charges, etc.) This way, staff can address market conditions and trends in a proactive manner. Setting specific prices within the authorized fee range continues to be the preferred process for implementing the specific prices, and is not recommended to change.

“The City’s goal is to charge user fees that are:	
“Comparable to neighboring agencies,”	The ARCS Department operates in a competitive market environment and staff will continue to rely on comparisons to local public, private and non-profit organizations to help determine the appropriate fees for service. This approach works well for the Department and is not recommended to change.
“Fair and reasonable for the facility or service provided, and”	This statement is a valid goal, but does not provide parameters as to what is “fair and reasonable.” This broad language is one of the challenges of increasing cost recovery.
“That offset operating costs as much as possible.”	The existing language encourages staff to stretch the general fund investment but requires a more precise definition of actual operating costs. This is the other challenge in achieving greater cost recovery.
“Offer a limited number of discounted rates for targeted populations ... and offer discounted rates or special promotional packages as sales promotion incentives where applicable.”	When an opportunity arises that affords the Department a chance to implement a special rate outside of the range, staff can do so on a limited and temporary basis under the current policy. This works well for the Department and is not recommended to change.

Study Purpose and Approach

In response to the Council’s direction and to address the challenges noted above, staff sought a qualified professional to provide a comprehensive review of the Department’s current cost recovery and pricing practices and to recommend a cost recovery policy. Areas to be explored in this study included the following:

- Defining direct and indirect cost elements;
- Identifying targeted cost recovery levels; and
- Comparing similar public agencies’ cost recovery practices.

The goals of this review were to create a policy designed specifically for the City, apply it consistently across all programs, make it readily understood by the community, and use it to maximize cost recovery while keeping services accessible. The City sought a system that could be more strategic and structured, yet still flexible. The ultimate desired outcome was the creation of a policy that achieves the most effective investment of general fund resources.

To achieve these goals, the Arts, Recreation and Community Services Department issued a request for qualifications for this project in 2013 and received statements of qualifications from five qualified firms. The organization with the strongest ability to successfully achieve the vision

for this project was determined to be PROS Consulting (<http://www.prosconsulting.com>). The City entered into a contract for services with PROS Consulting in the Fall of 2013.

With assistance from City staff, PROS Consulting gathered data on the budgeted revenues, expenses, and other relevant information related to identifying the current cost recovery levels. The consultants met with City Councilmembers and the Arts and PROS Commissioners to gain insight into the community's values and interests regarding services, pricing and cost recovery. Based on these conversations, the Open Space Division and its public programs were also added to the study.

Current Cost Recovery Results

To understand what is meant when talking about "costs," the first steps in this analysis were to better define cost categories, refine the cost recovery analysis, and gain a full understanding of the actual cost recovery data. Using 2012-13 budget information, the study found the ARCS Department as a whole has a *direct cost recovery level* of 72%. This captures the entire Department's general fund (i.e., non golf course) operations, including the expenses and revenue related to direct program delivery and the overhead costs associated with administering the Department. In addition, this direct cost recovery figure includes ARCS pool maintenance expenses and the maintenance costs for the City's 14 playfields which, although programmed by the ARCS Department, are maintained by the Public Services Department.

When expanding the analysis to include additional City-wide support services, the Department's 2012-13 budgeted *total cost recovery level* works out to 62%. This incorporates the direct expenses noted above and the Department's share of city-wide services such as building maintenance, human resources, information technology, and payroll. The Open Space programs demonstrated total cost recovery levels at approximately 10%, which is consistent with historical results.

Attachment 2 shows a summary of the cost recovery results by ARCS division, and also breaks down the results on a per unit basis. The unit-based data allow for better comparison between programs because the varying magnitudes of revenue and expenses can be broken down into meaningful components. The data show a range of cost recovery levels which reflects the tremendous breadth of ARCS offerings. The mutually beneficial relationship of these programs contributes to the high overall cost recovery of the entire Department. For example, the Bedford Gallery helps drive audiences to the Leshner Center and to Center Repertory performances, creating a synergy among all three programs.

The data show that the Department is doing well in absolute terms of recovering direct costs and the indirect expenses. The gap between current and 100% cost recovery represents a comparatively small (as a percentage of the entire general fund), yet still significant general fund investment in these community based programs. The extent to which more, less, or no general fund support should continue to be directed toward these services will be discussed later in this report.

The results are also positive on a relative basis, when looking at cost recovery figures from comparable agencies. Based on data gathered by PROS Consulting, Walnut Creek has among the highest cost recovery rates of similar cities.

The data analysis provides a more complete picture of the Department's program costs and revenues. This was a necessary step in the cost recovery efforts, and with this structure in place, cost recovery efforts can continue to be measured and updated going forward.

The analysis found that Walnut Creek is performing well in its cost recovery efforts. While there may be opportunity for the programs to enhance their cost recovery results, compared to other cities, there appears to be less room to grow. However, the programs can improve their policy structure, which will enhance price setting practices and increase public understanding of the City's pricing strategies.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the work PROS Consulting has done in other agencies, their understanding of the specific challenges of Walnut Creek's cost recovery situation, and staff's review of the opportunities, a new cost recovery approach is recommended.

PROS Consulting recommends a structure that will allow the City to group ARCS and Open Space programs into one of three classifications; Essential, Important, and Value-Added. The classifications allow for some continued flexibility, which was identified as an early goal for this initiative. The criteria for determining which programs fit into which areas are as follows:

- The *Essential* category includes the core programs that contribute most to a department's mission, and serve the vast majority of the community. The Essential category of programs that benefit the greater community are recommended to have the most moderate cost recovery level. This reflects the investment made by the community to support quality of life activities that broadly enrich the community. An example of this would be learn-to-swim programs, which provide an essential life skill to the community.
- *Important* programs include those programs that serve a balance of community and individual needs, but would not necessarily be central to a department's offerings. The Important offerings are recommended to have a higher level of cost recovery than the Essential programs, as they have a large but not universal reach in the community. Recreation and fitness swimming is an example of an Important program.
- The *Value-Added* classification incorporates those offerings that serve a narrower segment of the community and benefit individuals more than the broad population. The Value-Added programs would have the highest cost recovery levels, although the programs would not necessarily be self-supporting. These programs have a more narrow reach, and those that benefit from the programs are recommended to bear the vast majority of costs. Pool rentals are an example of such a program.

Attachments 3 and 4 demonstrate the recommended assignment of Walnut Creek's programs among the three classifications.

Cost recovery goals recommended by PROS Consulting for each of the three classifications, are as follows. The basis for these ranges will be discussed by PROS Consulting at the February 19 meeting.

<u>Classification</u>	<u>Total Cost Recovery Target</u>
Essential	0-30%
Important	31-70%
Value-Added	71%+

Differential pricing approaches (such as age-based fees and non-resident rates) were also explored by PROS Consulting and will be addressed in their presentation to Commissioners.

With a full understanding of the direct and indirect costs, prices can be set for the programs with the aim of achieving the targeted levels of total cost recovery. The results can then be measured against the cost recovery goals, and adjustments, if any, can be made with the flexibility this approach provides.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

When presented to the City Council, the Council could choose not to change the current pricing policy and practices, or could modify the policy to strive for greater or lesser cost recovery targets.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

- Attachment 1: PROS Consulting Power Point presentation
- Attachment 2: ARCS Cost Recovery summary
- Attachment 3: Recommended ARCS service classifications
- Attachment 4: Recommended Open Space service classifications

COMMISSION ACTION RECOMMENDED:

Review and comment on the cost recovery and pricing report and the associated policy recommendations.

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CITY OF WALNUT CREEK

Cost Recovery and Pricing Plan: Findings and Recommendations

Presented to Arts and PROS Commissions February 19, 2014

Goals and Desired Outcomes



- Build a shared vision for cost recovery
- Identify and define costs to achieve consistent definitions to communicate to elected officials, staff and users
- Refine cost recovery analysis
- Create a systematic approach towards program classification, price setting and cost recovery goals
- Establish consistency across different Divisions (who benefits, methodology of establishing prices different in different areas)
- Develop pricing policies and goals to help sustainably enhance the City's award-winning offerings and support vision and mission

Benchmark Cities



- Roseville
- San José
- Palo Alto
- San Mateo
- San Ramon

Benchmark Summary Findings



- Compared to other agencies, Walnut Creek stacks up well in terms of revenue generation
 - Cost Recovery is much higher than others with a majority of agencies ranging from 30% - 50% cost recovery while Walnut Creek is over 60-70% cost recovery for indirect and direct costs
- Revenue Generated per capita is also highest in Walnut Creek with \$142.62 generated followed by Roseville with \$132.04. However, a good portion of the revenue may also come from the quality, depth, and breadth of Walnut Creek's offerings and status as a regional destination
- All agencies, except San Ramon, have a structured Policy approach in place for areas ranging from earned income and pricing to scholarships. Walnut Creek has opportunities for improvement in these areas

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Met with Key Leaders and Stakeholders
 - Elected Officials
 - PROS Commission
 - Arts Commission
 - Internal Stakeholders / Staff

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Vision and Outcomes
 - Improve financial sustainability by creating a consistent, balanced approach to cost recovery
 - Ensure balance between cost recovery levels and offering the highest levels of quality service possible
 - Explore opportunities to expand and identify innovative sources of revenue generation to improve cost recovery
 - Manage the high expectations of the community
 - Ensure that the new policies and pricing are consistent, fair, and defensible.

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Strengths
 - Variety of offerings
 - Multi-generational appeal
 - Commitment to arts, recreation, and open space
 - Hard-working and dedicated staff
 - Willingness to partner

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Extent of Acceptable City Contribution
 - Currently ARCS is doing well at 72% cost recovery including field maintenance cost (62% of total overhead costs)
 - Level of cost recovery should vary using service classifications based on levels of benefit to the users
 - All agreed that 100% cost recovery may not be realistic in the short term but every effort to be financially sustainable should be explored

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Differential Pricing Strategies
 - Departments should be willing to continue exploring differential pricing strategies common in the private sector or at municipal golf courses:
 - ✦ Based on facility location
 - ✦ Time of the day
 - ✦ Weekday versus weekends
 - ✦ Holiday weekends versus non-holiday weekends
 - ✦ Age segments
 - ✦ Resident versus non-residents
 - ✦ Group discounts and packages deals.

Key Leader and Stakeholder Summary



- Top Priority
 - Develop a model and an approach to make consistent and defensible pricing and program decisions that lead to a financially sustainable operating structure.
 - Other priorities include
 - ✦ Desire to identify all the true costs associated with program offerings so as to make better pricing decisions.
 - ✦ Take advantage of ideas and policies that are successful in other similar communities.
 - ✦ Ensure future programming decisions balance cost recovery and improving quality of life for Walnut Creek residents

PROS Service Classification Method



Type of Service

- Core/Essential Service
- Important Service
- Value Added Service

Who Benefits?

- All the People in Community
- Individuals who Participate Benefit but all members of community benefit somehow
- Individual who participates

Who Pays?

- The community through the tax system, no user charges
- Individual users pay partial costs
- Individual users pay full costs

ARCS Service Classifications



<i>Essential</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Value-Added</i>
<i>Part of the Mission / Serves majority of the Community / Highest Level of contribution offered</i>	<i>Important to the community / Serves the broad community / Some level of contribution offered</i>	<i>Enhanced Community Offering / Serves niche groups / Limited to no contribution</i>
Recommended Cost Recovery Range: 0% - 30%	Recommended Cost Recovery Range: 31% - 70%	Recommended Cost Recovery Range: 71% and over
MUST OFFER THIS	SHOULD OFFER THIS	WOULD BE NICE TO OFFER THIS
Aquatic Instruction - Learn to Swim	Gym & Sports Field Rental	Adult Sports
Youth Health & Fitness Rec Classes	After School Sports - Intramural	After School Sports - Competitive
Senior Social Services and Drop-in Activities	Rec & Fitness Swimming	Summer Camps
Beginning Visual Arts Ed. Programs	Water Exercise Classes	Large Community Events
Beginning Performing Arts Ed. Programs	Youth Personal Enrichment Rec Classes	Special Events (e.g., walkathon)
	Adult Health & Fitness Rec Classes	Pool Rentals
	Senior Meals & Transportation Programs	Tennis Program
	Specialized Recreation	Rec Classes - Adult Personal Enrichment
	Intermediate Visual Arts Education Programs	Music Studio Rentals
	Intermediate Performing Arts Education Programs	Summer Youth Art Program (AAA)
	Preschool Programs	Advanced Visual Arts Education Programs
	Center REP Productions	Advanced Performing Arts Education Programs
	Visual Arts Program Exhibitions	Shellie Awards
	Performing Arts Theatre Rental	Young REP Theatre Education Program
	Senior Classes	Community Concerts (ParKoncerts)
		Family Theatre Festival
		Indoor / Outdoor Facility Rentals

Open Space Service Classifications



Essential	Important	Value-Added
<i>Part of the Mission / Serves majority of the Community / Highest Level of contribution offered</i>	<i>Important to the community / Serves the broad community / Some level of contribution offered</i>	<i>Enhanced Community Offering / Serves niche groups / Limited to no contribution</i>
0% - 30%	31% - 70%	71% and over
MUST OFFER THIS *	SHOULD OFFER THIS **	WOULD BE NICE TO OFFER THIS ***
Natural and cultural history walks	Natural and cultural history programs	Group reservations
Volunteers	Recreational experiences	Curriculum based programs
	Special events	Community Garden
		Multi-day educational programs

Cost of Service Model



- Overall ARCS cost recovery 62% (including City overhead):
 - Sports / Camps - 66%
 - ✦ Sports Field Rentals 30% cost recovery
 - Aquatics -44%
 - ✦ Pool Rentals is 29% cost recovery
 - Facility Rentals - 73%
 - Recreation Classes - 59%
 - Social Services - 24%
 - Civic Arts Education – 64%
 - Lesher Center - 76%
 - Center Repertory Theater Company - 66%
 - Bedford Gallery – 25%
- Open Space Program - 10%

Cost of Service Model



Summary

- Field and Aquatics Rentals present the largest opportunities for revenue generation based on their low cost recovery rates and their classification as Value-Added Programs
- Sports Camps, Arts and Recreation Classes & Programs all have strong cost recovery rates even after accounting for indirect costs and City-wide overhead cost based on data provided by City staff
- Open Space Group Reservations have a high cost recovery but overall Open Space programs have an opportunity to generate greater revenues to support their operational costs
- Continuing to track participation numbers and true costs for indirect and overhead costs will help ARCS and Open Space staff manage and price programs accurately in the future and thus ensure long-term financial sustainability

Revenue and Pricing Recommendations



Program Classification

- Incorporate core program classifications to shape future pricing decisions and range of cost recovery
- Communicate cost recovery goals by area to internal and external stakeholders to ensure consistency and clarity of vision
- Evaluate differential pricing strategies to help meet cost recovery goals
- Update program classification worksheet annually
- Evaluate programs that consistently fail to meet cost recovery goals for repositioning, re-pricing or elimination

Revenue and Pricing Recommendations



Rentals

- For Aquatics rentals, review negotiated agreement after 3 years to reflect cost recovery goals by program classification and true cost of service
- For Field Rentals, revise hourly rates to \$30 and \$35 for non-profits and private groups respectively
 - ✦ Institute a maximum of 5% price increase every 2 years to account for increasing field maintenance and staffing costs required to ensure quality and integrity of field surfaces
 - ✦ Current cap is not equitable to City's costs – proposed structure is provided below

Current Range (hours)		Cap	Proposed Range (hours)		Cap
90	249	90	100	274	100
250	449	100	275	474	150
450		120	475		175

Revenue and Pricing Recommendations



New Revenue Sources

- Crowd-funding
 - ✦ www.Kickstarter.org
 - ✦ www.Razoo.com
- Naming Rights
- Grants
 - ✦ Continue seeking grants appropriate to furthering the mission of ARCS & Open Space
- Sponsorships
 - ✦ Undertake sponsorship valuation to assess potential value of ARCS' & Open Space assets based on visitation numbers

Revenue and Pricing Recommendations



Policies

- Continue to revisit rental policies for field rentals and aquatics to accurately reflect equity of use and cost of offering services
- Establish a formal Scholarship Policy Department-wide for ARCS

City of Walnut Creek
 Arts, Recreation & Community Services
 Cost Recovery Summary - 2012-13 Budgeted

Division	Program ¹	Cost Recovery			Service Units		Per Unit Indicators		
		Division Only	Direct (with ARCS Dept)	Total (with City Svcs)	Annual #	Unit	Average Cost		Average Revenue
							Direct	Total	
350 Sports & Camps	Adult Sports	66%	63%	54%	235	Registrations	\$1,081	\$1,251	\$679
	After School Sports	64%	61%	53%	427	Registrations	\$436	\$505	\$267
	Gym Rental	139%	132%	114%	10,486	Rental Hours	\$42	\$49	\$55
	Field Rental (includes field maintenance) ¹	30%	30%	30%	24,503	Rental Hours	\$25	\$26	\$8
	Summer Camps	95%	90%	78%	1,182	Registrations	\$223	\$258	\$202
	Total		75%	73%	66%				
351 Aquatics	Aquatics Instruction	75%	74%	69%	3,607	Registrations	\$60	\$64	\$44
	Recreation & Fitness Swimming	55%	53%	46%	64,204	Registrations	\$8	\$9	\$4
	Pool Rentals	37%	35%	29%	5,058	Rental Hours	\$88	\$106	\$31
	Special Events (Park Rentals) ²	32%	31%	28%	36	Events	\$1,355	\$1,491	\$417
	Large Community Events (Park Rentals) ²	206%	193%	159%	3	Events	\$4,597	\$5,576	\$8,867
	Total		53%	51%	44%				
352 Facility Rentals	Indoor & Outdoor Rentals	86%	82%	73%	9,194	Rental Hours	\$64	\$72	\$52
	Total	86%	82%	73%					
353 Rec Classes	Recreation Classes	71%	67%	58%	4,734	Registrations	\$172	\$201	\$116
	Tennis Program	98%	93%	80%	1	Contracts	\$44,969	\$52,319	\$42,000
	Total	72%	69%	59%					
354 Social Services	Senior Classes	25%	24%	23%	1,030	Registrations	\$174	\$182	\$41
	Senior Meals & Transportation	48%	46%	45%	11,280	Registrations	\$8	\$8	\$4
	Social Services & Drop-In Activities	0%	0%	0%	13,950	Registrations	\$13	\$14	\$0
	Specialized Recreation	41%	40%	38%	649	Registrations	\$283	\$292	\$112
	Total	26%	25%	24%					
621 Civic Arts Ed	Visual Arts Programs	52%	49%	42%	5,204	Registrations	\$217	\$252	\$107
	Performing Arts Programs	87%	81%	67%	2,100	Registrations	\$249	\$303	\$203
	Preschool Programs	116%	113%	107%	318	Registrations	\$1,895	\$2,007	\$2,146
	Total	78%	74%	64%					
631 Leshner Center	Performing Arts Theatre Rental	91%	86%	76%	687	Events	\$4,720	\$5,367	\$4,075
	Total	91%	86%	76%					
641 Center REP	Center REP Productions	84%	80%	65%	47,602	Tickets Sold	\$44	\$54	\$35
	Young REP Theatre Education Program	107%	102%	86%	110	Registrations	\$793	\$945	\$811
	Total	85%	81%	66%					
642 Municipal Events	Community Concerts (ParKoncerts)	0%	0%	0%	2,850	Registrations	\$9	\$11	\$0
	Family Theatre Festival	107%	101%	82%	7,100	Registrations	\$14	\$17	\$14
	Total	84%	80%	65%					
651 Bedford Gallery	Visual Arts Program Exhibitions	31%	30%	25%	29,309	Visitors	\$19	\$22	\$6
	Total	31%	30%	25%					
Grand Total		75%	72%	62%					

NOTES:

1. Field Rentals are the only program listed that includes maintenance expenses that are budgeted in Public Services. All other division and ARCS department costs and revenues are budgeted in ARCS. Field rental division costs shown here include the cost of maintenance for the 14 playfields rented by the Sports & Camps-Field Rental program.

2. Park maintenance expenses associated with Special and/or Large Community Events are not included.

Prepared: February 11, 2014

Program Assessment Worksheet

Program Area Classification

Essential <i>Part of the Mission / Serves majority of the Community / Highest Level of contribution offered</i>	Important <i>Important to the community / Serves the broad community / Some level of contribution offered</i>	Value-Added <i>Enhanced Community Offering / Serves niche groups / Limited to no contribution</i>
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	Visual Arts Program Exhibitions	Shellie Awards
	Performing Arts Theatre Rental	Young REP Theatre Education Program
	Senior Classes	Community Concerts (ParKoncerts)
		Family Theatre Festival
		Indoor / Outdoor Facility Rentals

* Would you offer this if you built your program / services from the ground up? ** Important but not required

*** If this kept losing money, would you still keep offering it?

Program Assessment Worksheet

Program Area Classification

<i>Essential</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Value-Added</i>
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Natural and cultural history walks Volunteers	Natural and cultural history programs Recreational experiences Special events	Group reservations Curriculum based programs Community Garden Multi-day educational programs

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** Important but not required

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